



## Mass Parts 49/52: *When Is Mass Over?*

When is Mass over? There is a straight-forward, and yet tricky, answer to this. I will tell you when Mass is over. I literally say: "The Mass is ended, Go in peace." Fairly to the point. But I guess I really don't want you leaving when I say "Go." Let me explain.

You definitely shouldn't leave immediately after you receive Communion. This idea can lead to the belief that Mass is all about *me*, and only me, getting *my* Communion. The Eucharist is about each of us being transformed into Jesus and gathering as a people together: the Body of Christ. There is nothing individualistic about it. Others can easily tell those that plan on leaving immediately from Communion: they put their coats on when they come up to Communion.

So fine, we have stayed in our pews, prayed for those around us while they receive, and continue in prayer for the world for a time. We have listened to the Prayer After Communion and have received the Final Blessing. The priest said: "Go in Peace"...so why can't we leave?

There is still a Closing Song. The nature of the Closing Song is to prepare us for Mission. It is the song that sends us forth to go out into the world and fulfill our Gospel call. We should stay to sing and listen. There is also the Exit Procession, which we should accompany by our singing. My mother taught us that we weren't allowed to leave Mass until the last note of the last song was finished.

I know there are good reasons for having to leave Mass quickly, but there are also bad reasons. The requirements of a job or illness are good reasons. (Though I am willing to write to your boss to tell them you may be a few minutes late). There are also reasons that are not so good. To beat traffic? To hurry up and get home and stare at each other? To get a table at Bob Evans more quickly? Be honest with yourself about why you leave Mass early. Why can't we all just stay a couple more minutes? Masses at Holy Trinity rarely go a full hour anyway.

-Fr. Kopp

Next Week: Sent on a Mission